

## CHAPTER 2

### DEMOGRAPHICS

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##### Introduction

The City of Falls Church, Virginia, despite its relatively small population and land area, stands at the forefront nationally on many important social, economic, and demographic indicators used to describe a community's population. The City is centrally situated in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan region, and is experiencing many of the same changes as its neighboring cities: a growing and more ethnically and racially diverse population; younger, more transient residents; and increased housing costs. However, Falls Church is set apart from many of its neighbors by some other important indicators. For instance, the City has the highest median family income in the nation and has the highest percentage of persons with at least a college degree in the nation.

This chapter examines Falls Church's demographic profile in detail and explores the City's population, income, and housing trends using data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC) and the City of Falls Church.

##### Population Growth

Like Arlington County and the Cities of Alexandria and Fairfax in Northern Virginia, Falls Church's population has risen and declined according to the changing social and economic factors of the times. For instance, as a result of the post-WWII wave of suburban migration and a national baby boom, Falls Church experienced a period of rapid population growth from the end of World War II to the mid-1960s. By 1970, the population in Falls Church had reached an historic peak of 10,772 persons. However, this boom was followed by a decade of population decline. As women entered the workforce in record numbers, births dropped and traditional households and families gave way to more diversified and smaller configurations. Between 1970 and 1980, the population in Falls Church decreased by 1,257 persons, or almost 12 percent. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, however, population increased again as inner-core suburbs such as Falls Church grew to offer more and better jobs, accessible transportation, larger inventories of rental housing, and good schools. By 2000 there were 10,377 people living in Falls Church, an 8.3 percent (799 persons) increase over 1990, and a 9.1 percent (862 persons) increase over 1980.

Since the US Census is only conducted every ten years, exact population information beyond 2000 is not available; however, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC) produces five, ten, and 20-year population, employment, and household forecasts for each jurisdiction in this region from the date of the last US Census

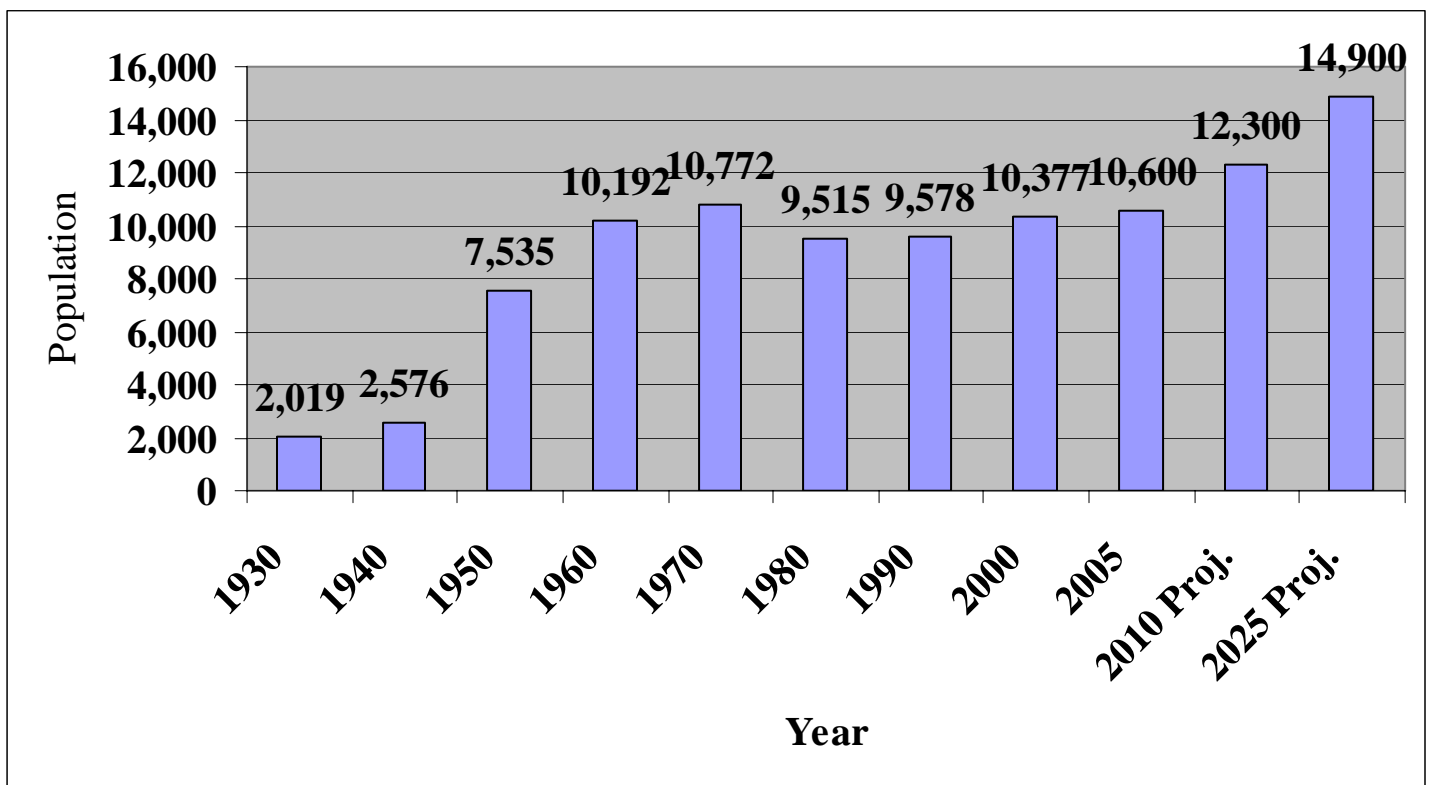
Projections from the MWCOC call for the City's population to continue to increase over the next 25 years. MWCOC estimates a 2005 population of 10,600, a 2010 population of 12,300 and a 2025 population of 14,900. See Figure 2-1 for a table of historical population changes from 1930 to 2000, and projected population changes for 2005 through 2025.

Projected population increases are based on several factors including redevelopment, infill, expanded household sizes, and current and expected vacancies. For instance, between 2005 and 2010 it is anticipated that another 25 single-family detached residences and 1,058 residential condominium and/or apartment units will be built within the City. These 1,083 units would generate another 1,948 persons, based on the City's average number of persons per single-family detached and attached households. By 2025 it is anticipated that an additional (over 2010 figures) 28 single-family detached residences and 1,700 residential condominiums and/or apartments will be constructed within the City.

**Figure 2-1  
POPULATION, 1930-2025**

| <b>Year</b>             | <b>Population</b> |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>1930</b>             | <b>2,019</b>      |
| <b>1940</b>             | <b>2,576</b>      |
| <b>1950</b>             | <b>7,535</b>      |
| <b>1960</b>             | <b>10,192</b>     |
| <b>1970</b>             | <b>10,772</b>     |
| <b>1980</b>             | <b>9,515</b>      |
| <b>1990</b>             | <b>9,578</b>      |
| <b>2000</b>             | <b>10,377</b>     |
| <b>2005</b>             | <b>10,600</b>     |
| <b>2010 Projections</b> | <b>12,300</b>     |
| <b>2025</b>             | <b>14,900</b>     |

*Source: US Census, 1930-2000 and MWCOC Round 7.0 Forecasts, 2000-2025*



The actual 2010 and 2025 populations could be smaller or larger than the projected figures based on the final unit counts for projects currently being planned and future projects, and how much residential development the real estate market will allow in the next 10 to 20 years. Today, few sites remain within the City that can accommodate large-scale residential construction, although significant residential growth could occur within sites that are redeveloped with residential or mixed-use projects.

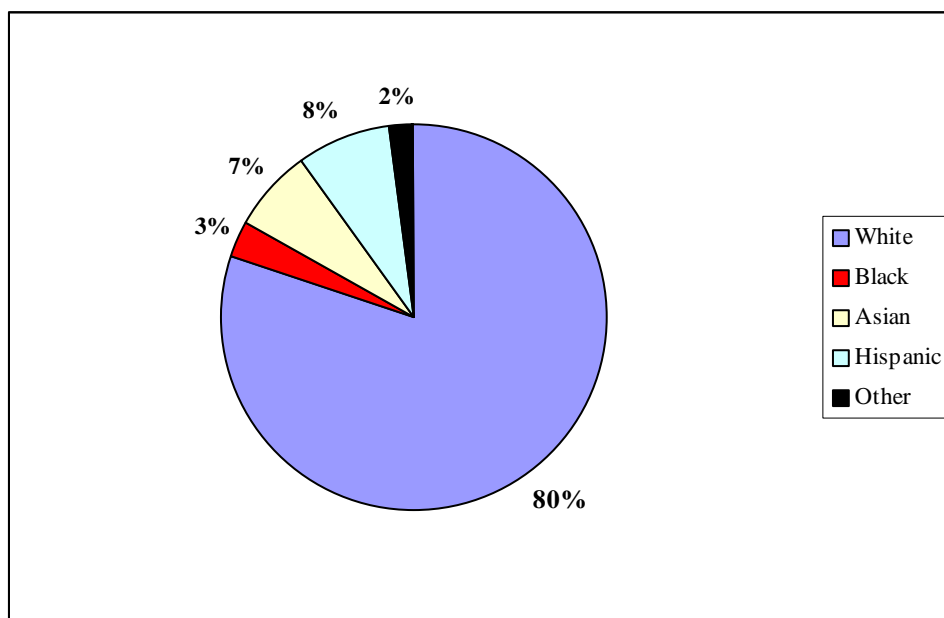
### Racial and Ethnic Diversity

The population of the City of Falls Church is relatively homogenous, although the racial and ethnic mix has increased substantially over the past 30 years. Since 1970 the number of African American and Latino persons has doubled, the foreign-born population has tripled, and the Asian population has increased tenfold. In 2000, White persons comprised 80 percent of the population, Asian persons comprised 7 percent of the population, Black or African American persons comprised 3 percent of the population, and Hispanic or Latino persons comprised 8.6 percent of the population.

**Figure 2-2**  
**RACE AND ETHNICITY, 2000**

| Race/Ethnicity | Percentage of Population |
|----------------|--------------------------|
| White          | 80%                      |
| Black          | 3%                       |
| Asian          | 7%                       |
| Hispanic       | 8%                       |
| Other          | 2%                       |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>100%</b>              |

*Source: US Census, 2000*



Despite the increase in the percentage of minority persons in the City, Falls Church is nevertheless distinct regionally more for its lack of minority residents than for its recent increases in its minority population. The City, along with Loudoun County, which is located along the outermost fringe of the expanding DC metropolitan area, has the smallest percentage of minorities in the region. Also, Falls Church recorded the smallest net change in the percentage increase of its minority population between 1990 and 2000.

### Age Composition

Like thousands of communities across the United States, Falls Church began the 1960s with a relatively large population of persons ages 0 to 19. Forty-two percent of the City's population in 1960 was 19 years of age or under, exceeding both the national and regional percentages for this age cohort. Persons 65 years or older, in contrast, comprised less than six percent of the population. The median age of City residents in 1960 was 27.8.

By 2000 a substantial shift had occurred. The median age of a Falls Church resident was 39.7 (the highest median age in the Washington Metropolitan region in 2000), which was more than ten years older than a City resident of 1960. The percentage of persons 65 of age or older almost doubled between 1960 and 2000 (12.2 percent of the population in 2000 compared to 5.7 percent in 1960). On the other hand, the percentage of persons 19 years of age or under almost halved.

**Figure 2-3**  
**AGE DISTRIBUTION, 1960-2000**

| Age          | Percentage of<br>Population 1960 | Percentage of<br>Population<br>2000 |
|--------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>0-19</b>  | 42.0%                            | 24.8%                               |
| <b>20-44</b> | 33.0%                            | 35.0%                               |
| <b>45-64</b> | 19.3%                            | 28.0%                               |
| <b>65+</b>   | 5.7%                             | 12.2%                               |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>100.0%</b>                    | <b>100.0%</b>                       |

*Source: US Census, 2000*

Persons in this age group comprised only 25 percent of the population in 2000, up from 21 percent in 1980 and 1990, but down from 1960 when they comprised 42 percent of the population. See Figure 2-3 for a comparison of the City's age distribution in 1960 and in 2000.

### Marital Status

In 2000, married persons comprised 50 percent of the Falls Church population; single persons comprised 27 percent; divorced and separated persons comprised 13 percent; and widowed persons comprised seven percent.

### Education

Falls Church ranks number one in the nation in the percentage of persons with at least a college degree. In 2000, 63.7 percent of the persons 25 years of age or older living in Falls Church had at least a bachelor's degree.

Approximately 34 percent of the population, or one of every three adults, had a Master's, professional, or doctorate degree, which is almost four times the national average. Only one location in the United States had a higher percentage of persons with advanced degrees in 2000: Los Alamos, New Mexico, which is a major scientific research community.

## **Income**

Falls Church ranks first in the nation in median family income, third in per capita income, eighth in median household income and 12th in the proportion of households with annual incomes of \$150,000 or more. In 2000 the median Falls Church household income was \$74,924, and one of seven households had an annual income equal to or greater than \$150,000.

Between 1990 and 2000 the City's national ranking went from 14th to eighth in median household income, from fourth to first in median family income, and from fourth to third in per capita income. On each of these measures, the distance between the City's median and per capita income figures and the nation's widened. During this time period, median household and family income both showed slightly faster growth in Falls Church than in the region as a whole. In addition, the City experienced a decrease in the poverty rate from 5.2 percent in 1990 to 4.2 percent in 2000.

## **Mobility**

Data from the US Census reveals that the City's population is a mix of relatively mobile/transient persons and persons who have lived in the City for an extended period of time. According to the Northern Virginia Databook, approximately 45 percent of residents moved into the City between 1995 and 2000. The population turnover rate in the City in both the 1980 and 1990 censuses was almost identical to that found in 2000: more than 40 percent of the 1980 population was new within the preceding five year period, and more than 40 percent of the 1990 population was new within its preceding five year period. The same pattern was found in Arlington County and the City of Alexandria, communities at comparable stages of development. All three inner-core communities lost population during the 1970s and gained it during the 1980s. In addition, their population turnover rates remained the same with 43 to 47 percent of the population being replaced every five years.

On the other hand, there is also a stable base of persons who moved to Falls Church during the 1950s and 1960s or earlier who have chosen to remain in the community. According to the 2000 Census, one of five householders in the City has been living at his/her current address for 25 years or more.

## **Households**

In 2000 the City of Falls Church had a total of 4,471 households, up from 4,195 households in 1990 but down from 4,484 households in 1995. An estimated 34 percent of the households in 2000 were occupied by one person, just up from 33 percent in 1990. Single person households are roughly split between those who rent and those who own (55 percent live in rental housing and the remaining in owner occupied units). Despite the increase in single-person households between 1990 and 2000, the average household size increased from 2.27 persons per household in 1990 to 2.31 persons per household in 2000.

The MWCOG Round 7.0 Forecasts for the number of households in the years 2005, 2010, 2020, and 2025 are 4,600, 5,500, 6,900, and 7,000 respectively. These projected increases in the number of households correspond with the projected MWCOG population increases.

## **Families**

Approximately 59 percent of the households in Falls Church are family units (two or more persons living together who are related, with or without children). This represents a drop of more than 20 percent from 1970, when 80 percent of household units in the City had a family residing within them. The decrease in family unit households was from among family units with children. In 1970, close to 43 percent of the households in Falls Church had one or more children living in them. By 2000 the percentage had dropped to 30 percent.

## **Home Ownership**

Over the past two decades, a surging economy and new construction have boosted the number of homeowners in Northern Virginia. Homeowners could be found in 65 percent of households in Northern Virginia and in close to 61 percent of households in Falls Church in 2000. This is an increase of one percent over 1990 when the home ownership rate in the City was 60 percent.

Despite the increasing homeownership rate in Falls Church, there is still a relatively high percentage of persons who are renters. Approximately 40 percent of the housing in the City was renter occupied in 2000. This figure, exceeded regionally only by Arlington County and the City of Alexandria, places Falls Church among the top six percent of localities in the nation in the percentage of its housing stock occupied by renters.

## **Housing Prices and Values**

One of the primary obstacles to home ownership in the City of Falls Church is the high average cost of housing in the City. Of the 3,141 counties and independent cities in the United States, Falls Church ranks eighth in mean gross rent and 23rd in median housing value. In 2003 the average assessed value of single-family detached dwelling units was \$527,026 and the average rent for a three-bedroom apartment was \$1,528..

Falls Church, to a greater degree than its neighbors in the metropolitan region, lacks dispersion in real estate prices. Its housing inventory is compressed into a narrow, and relatively high, price band that severely constrains housing opportunities for many prospective, entry-level buyers. See the Housing Chapter for more information about housing in the City of Falls Church. [[\*\*Weblink to Housing Chapter\*\*](#)]

## **Employment**

The resident labor force is made up of persons who reside in a locality and are eligible to work, regardless of where they work. In 2000 over 50 percent of the labor force in Falls Church was employed in three industries: professional, scientific, management services (20.4 percent); public administration (18 percent) and; education, health and social services (15.5 percent). The remainder of the population was dispersed between other services; retail trade; arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services; information and; finance, insurance, real estate and rental and leasing. In addition, approximately 28 percent of the resident labor force in the City was employed by local (six percent), state (two percent), or federal government (20 percent). See Figure 2-4 for more detailed information about City residents' occupations in 2000.

**Figure 2-4**  
**OCCUPATIONS OF CITY RESIDENTS, 2000**

| <b>Occupation</b>                               | <b>Number of Workers</b> | <b>Percent of Total</b> |
|---|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries</b>     | 11                       | 0.2%                    |
| <b>Construction</b>                             | 181                      | 3.0%                    |
| <b>Manufacturing</b>                            | 122                      | 2.1%                    |
| <b>Transportation</b>                           | 169                      | 2.9%                    |
| <b>Information</b>                              | 398                      | 6.8%                    |
| <b>Wholesale Trade</b>                          | 83                       | 1.4%                    |
| <b>Retail Trade</b>                             | 420                      | 7.2%                    |
| <b>Finance, insurance, and real estate</b>      | 400                      | 6.8%                    |
| <b>Professional, scientific, management</b>     | 1,193                    | 20.4%                   |
| <b>Entertainment &amp; recreation services</b>  | 355                      | 6.1%                    |
| <b>Educational, health, and social services</b> | 905                      | 15.5%                   |
| <b>Other professional and related services</b>  | 565                      | 9.6%                    |
| <b>Public Administration</b>                    | 1,055                    | 18.0%                   |
| <b>Total Employees</b>                          | <b>5,857</b>             | <b>100.0%</b>           |

Source: US Census, 2000

The unemployment rate within the City of Falls Church during the past few years has been low compared to the state and the nation, as seen in Figure 2-5. In 2002 the unemployment rate in the City of Falls Church was 2.9 percent, compared to 4.1 percent in the state and 5.8 percent in the nation.

**Figure 2-5**  
**AVERAGE ANNUAL UNEMPLOYMENT RATES COMPARISON, 1993-2002**

| <b>Location</b>      | <b>1997</b> | <b>1998</b> | <b>1999</b> | <b>2000</b> | <b>2001</b> | <b>2002</b> |
|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Falls Church</b>  | 3.6         | 2.2         | 1.3         | 1.1         | 2.6         | 2.9         |
| <b>Virginia</b>      | 4.0         | 2.9         | 2.8         | 2.2         | 3.4         | 4.1         |
| <b>United States</b> | 4.9         | 4.5         | 4.2         | 4.0         | 4.7         | 5.8         |

*Source: Virginia Employment Commission, Estimated Labor Force Data, and US Bureau of Labor and Statistics*

The number of people who are employed within the City is expected to increase in the next 20 years. According

to the MWCOC Round 7.0 Cooperative Forecasts the 2005 estimate for total employment is 9,500 and is anticipated to rise by approximately 19 percent by 2010 and 52% by 2025. These increases are expected in response to anticipated commercial growth in the Broad and Washington Street corridors related to the redevelopment of several large mixed-use projects, City Center, Gordon Road Triangle and other projected redevelopment projects.

**Figure 2-6**  
**EMPLOYMENT FORECASTS 2005-2025**

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Employment</b> |
|-------------|-------------------|
| 2005        | 9,500             |
| 2010        | 11,800            |
| 2020        | 17,800            |
| 2025        | 19,900            |

**MWCOG Round 7.0 Cooperative Forecasts**

**Future Trends and Projections**

Past and current census data indicate that current social and economic trends in the City will continue over the next ten to 15 years. It is likely that population, the number of households, household size, and employment will increase. In addition, the five-year housing turnover rate will likely remain at approximately 45 percent. As the City’s housing stock continues to increase in value, so will the demand for housing that is affordable to low and moderate income households. In addition, with an increase in the diversity of housing unit types expected to be built in coming years, the City might also experience some amount of change in the population’s age range and socioeconomic status. In sum, given the consistency of the social and economic trends over the past couple of decades, the City is likely to continue on a similar path of growth and mobility.